



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, James L. Streeter, and Elissa T. Wright.

Tuesday, February 7, 2006

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Harry Watson.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Office Assistant Elga Concepcion.

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by John Sutherland.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

2006-0039 Proclamation Recognizing Patriotism Week

PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING PATRIOTISM WEEK

Read

Mayor Watson read the Proclamation.

PUBLIC HEARING

Recess for Public Hearing to Solicit Comments Prior to Preparation of the Proposed FYE 2007 Budget

The public hearing began at 7:40 p.m. to solicit comments prior to preparation of the proposed fiscal year 2007 budget.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger stated that although the Town Council has not established the formal date of the public hearing, there will be a date established of March 30 (later determined to be March 29) at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

Lea Graner Kennedy, 152 Cedar Road, Mystic, asked the Town Council to listen to the needs of the Board of Education (BOE) and students. Ms. Kennedy doesn't support a cut in Town services or the school budget. She stated that funds which are received at both the State and Federal levels need to be taken into consideration with respect to the budget.

Scott Meyer, 75 Midway Oval, supports community policing in the Fort Hill Homes area and the hiring of another Housing and Zoning official.

John Sutherland, 32 Neptune Drive, stated that reductions "across the board" are not the best method to achieve cost reductions in the budget. If services need to be cut, he thinks it would be better to eliminate 10% from Public Works or Parks and Recreation, as opposed to Emergency Services.

Joe Baril, 26 Saint Joseph Court, RTM member for District 1 and a firefighter, is not in favor of reducing Emergency Dispatch Services and feels that this department is already understaffed.

Natalie Billing, 15 Ashby Street, Mystic, asked the Council to support a modest increase in both the Town and Board of Education budgets of at least 3%. Ms. Billing would prefer that all Town services be maintained and urged the Council to be cautious during budget deliberations.

Genevieve Cerf, 17 Crescent Street, Groton Long Point, RTM member for District 8, cited examples of management tools that are used by large corporations. She feels that the Town needs to be looking at these management methods, cutting the budget, and increasing productivity.

There being no further comments, the Mayor declared the public hearing closed at 8:00 p.m.

IV. CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Louise Fabrykiewicz, 281 State Street, New London, Chair of the Sierra Club, requested that the Council pass a resolution to oppose the development of the Broadwater Liquefied Natural Gas Terminal in Long Island Sound. She stated that there will be a Citizens' Action Forum opposing Broadwater on February 18 at New London High School.

Bobbi Jo Cini, 316 Groton Long Point Road, doesn't understand why the Town would install another park in light of the budget preparation and when Sutton Park is in need of improvements.

Phil Butta, 282 Noank Ledyard Road, a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, supports the building of the Tercentennial Legacy Playground. He stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission will try to raise the bulk of the money for this project. Mr. Butta urged the Council to be creative when looking at the budget and to look for new ways to keep services strong and funded.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

None.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2006-0036 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Meeting of January 17, 2006 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

Councilor Sheets would like page four of the January 17, 2006 minutes amended with respect to her husband's revaluation.

b. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2005-0317 FYE 2005 CAFR

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0023 Local Law Enforcement Block Grant

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0028 Tercentennial Legacy Playground

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0029 Mystic Academy Parklet Playscape

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0031 Appointment and Reappointment of NRZ Committee Members

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0032 Appointment of Richard Fitzgerald to Planning Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0033 Appointment of Wendy Perez Pullen to Planning Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0034 Appointment of Robert Deveau, Jr. to the Fair Rent Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0035 Appointment of Yolanda Carroll to the Board of Assessment Appeals

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

c. Special Trust Fund Contributions

2006-0030 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Emanuel and Ellen Dander (in memory of Mildred Hastedt) - \$25.00 - Library Discretionary

Hugh R. Smith (in memory of Mildred Hastedt) - \$25.00 - Library Discretionary

Various Donations - \$1,133.44 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program

City of Groton - \$382.50 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program

Joseph Lawrence School of Nursing Alumni Association - \$50.00 - Library Discretionary

Mistick River BPW - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary

J. H. Simpson - \$60.00 - Social Services Discretionary

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent noted that every three to four weeks Human Services picks up truck loads of new clothing at Wal-Mart. This clothing represents items that cannot be repackaged and sold at the store.

Mayor Harry Watson noted that these Wal-Mart donations are also utilized in the Career Closet Program which provides unemployed people with clothing for interviews.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried unanimously.

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Several Councilors received communications regarding the Bus Ordinance in Noank and the budget.

Councilor Kolnaski, along with other Councilors, met with State Legislators to discuss taxes and other issues on January 17. She attended the Town Council Board of Education RTM Liaison Committee meeting on January 18, the Permanent School Building Committee meeting, and an Economic Development presentation on January 19. She attended the Senior Center Computer Coordinating Committee meeting on January 27, and the Board of Education (BOE) budget hearing on January 26. She attended BOE budget discussions on January 28, February 1, and February 6.

Councilor Bond received communications regarding the closing of Noank School in 2007 and the

BOE's budget hearing.

Councilor Streeter attended the Economic Development Commission meeting on January 19 and suggested that they provide a presentation to the Council. He attended the Thames Street Ad-hoc Business Committee meeting on January 26.

Councilor Sheets received inquiries regarding the results of appeals to the appraisals which were expected in January. Town Manager Oefinger will follow up on this matter in the Weekly Status Report. She received a letter regarding a newspaper article's report of a death at Pequot Village.

Mayor Watson attended the installation of the Senior Club Officers at the Senior Center on January 24. He attended the Commission for Economic Diversification of Southeastern Connecticut meeting at Millstone on January 25, and a mentor training session at West Side Middle School on January 25. He attended a presentation regarding the renovation and expansion of the Senior Center on January 31, and a Town Management Team meeting on February 1. He attended a meeting at the Groton Utilities Water Treatment Facility on February 2. He received emails from Scott Meyer expressing his support of community policing and from Aquarion Water Company which is in need of volunteers to serve on the Customer Advisory Board.

b. Representative Town Meeting

The RTM is meeting on February 8.

c. Clerk of the Council

No report.

d. Town Manager

The Town Manager reviewed the following referrals which are on next week's Committee of the Whole agenda: the Claude Chester School Window Replacement Grant and its corresponding Resolution referring this item to the BOE, the Senior Center needs assessment, and Sandy Hollow Road improvements.

He received notification that the sixth annual Unite for Youth of the Groton Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition is scheduled for March 23 at the Mystic Art Association.

Mr. Oefinger stated that he requested an extension from the State for formulating the 2005 Grand List. The extension deadline is February 28.

The Town Manager stated that since the 2005 Revaluation and the informal appeals process were never completed, there will not be a formal response. Residents who participated in this process will be receiving at least one letter from the Town. The Town Manager wanted to let residents know that if they noted inaccuracies in the factual attributes of their property, that information will be "captured".

He emphasized that the Assessor's office is under pressure to put together a new Grand List by February 28. The Grand List is needed in order to generate the proposed mill rate for the proposed budget which will be sent out to the printer on March 4.

Responding to Councilor Sheets with respect to Cole Layer Trumble's (CLT) contract price, the Town Manager stated that there are some savings which will be applied to next year's evaluation but it will not be a significant amount of money.

e. Town Attorney

No report.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Scott

No meeting; no report.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Bond

No meeting; no report.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

No meeting; no report.

d. Environment & Recreation - Chairman Sheets

No meeting; no report.

e. Finance - Chairman Wright

Councilor Wright read the minutes of the meeting held on January 24, 2006 which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman O'Beirne

Councilor O'Beirne read the minutes of the meeting held on January 24, 2006 which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Streeter

No meeting; no report.

h. Public Works - Chairman Bartinik

No meeting; no report.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Watson

The Committee of the Whole met on January 24 and the items on tonight's agenda are a result of that meeting.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilor Bond believes that the Council hasn't given the Town Manager any formal budget direction. Responding to Councilor Bond, Mayor Watson stated that this matter will be addressed at next week's Committee of the Whole meeting.

2006-0045 2006 Revaluation

2006 REVALUATION

Referred

Councilor Bond requested that a new referral be submitted to the Committee of the Whole.

X. NEW BUSINESS**2005-0317 FYE 2005 CAFR**

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE FYE 2005 AUDIT REPORT

WHEREAS, the Town Council has considered the annual audit of the Town's finances, covering the fiscal year from July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005, and

WHEREAS, the Council has discussed the audit findings with the manager of the audit team from the firm of Blum Shapiro, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town of Groton accepts and files the FYE 2005 CAFR, Auditor's Report and Management Letter and undertakes to comply with all appropriate recommendations therein.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0023 Local Law Enforcement Block Grant**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT BLOCK GRANT**

WHEREAS, the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Program provides funds for police departments for reducing crime and improving public safety, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton Police Department needs to target aggressive drivers and speeders in known problem areas, such as the Route 12 - U.S. Route 1 corridor, and

WHEREAS, funds from a new grant would be used to purchase additional speed detection devices, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Manager may apply for a Local Law Enforcement Block Grant consisting of State and Federal funds totaling \$4,000.

A motion was made by Councilor Wright, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0028 Tercentennial Legacy Playground**RESOLUTION ON FUNDING FOR THE TERCENTENNIAL LEGACY PLAYGROUND**

WHEREAS, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Parks and Recreation, following a lengthy study, have jointly proposed the construction of a specially accessible and inclusive playground within Poquonnock Plains Park, to be known as the Tercentennial Legacy Playground, and

WHEREAS, it is planned that the majority of the funding for this \$350,000 project will come from sources other than taxpayer funds, and

WHEREAS, the playground committee and the Town Manager recommend using funds unexpended from the Community Events Fund (Acct. # 32600) and the Tercentennial Donations Account (Acct. # 73320), now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves the designation of \$28,000 from accounts 32600 and 73320 for the Tercentennial Legacy Playground, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that Town staff may initiate and conduct a fundraising program and a partnership program, to seek grants and contributions for this project, to be deposited in funds of the Town of Groton, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Council welcomes all kinds of collaborations from citizens, businesses and other organizations for this purpose.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The Assistant to the Town Manager distributed copies of a revised resolution to the Town Council.

Councilor Bond stated that the word "majority" could represent 51% and this wording could leave open what taxpayers will actually fund. Responding to Councilor Bond, the Town Manager and the Assistant to the Town Manager made suggestions for other words to replace "majority". Councilor Bond was concerned that further funding for this project might be requested from the Town.

Councilor Wright shared similar views as Councilor Bond. Councilor Wright stated that it was

her understanding that, aside from the \$28,000, there is no commitment for additional Town funding and that the balance of the cost will be raised through fund-raising efforts.

Responding to Councilor Bond's inquiry regarding projects requiring lengthy studies, the Town Manager stated that this was not the case for this particular project as an individual had planned to leave a significant gift to the Town.

Responding to Councilor Sheets' comments regarding schools with playground issues, the Town Manager stated that this project was not in lieu of addressing schools needing playground upgrades.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0029

Mystic Academy Parklet Playscape

RESOLUTION APPROVING THE RELOCATION OF A PLAYScape IN MYSTIC

WHEREAS, the beginning of site work for the construction of the new Northeast Academy School will require removal of a two-year-old playscape from its location at the Freeman Hathaway school grounds, and

WHEREAS, the existing play equipment at the Mystic Academy Parklet is in a state of disrepair and is unsafe, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves of the relocation of the newer playscape from Freeman Hathaway to the Mystic Academy Parklet, at a cost of approximately \$18,500 that is to be incurred within funds already appropriated to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

Responding to Councilor O'Beirne's inquiry regarding the cost of this project, the Town Manager stated that \$18,500 is representative of the total cost of a private contractor and the re-establishment of the landing zone.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0031

Appointment and Reappointment of NRZ Committee Members

RESOLUTION APPOINTING AND REAPPOINTING MEMBERS OF THE FORT HILL NRZ COMMITTEE

WHEREAS, the Town Council adopted an ordinance entitled "An Ordinance for The Fort Hill Homes Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Strategic Plan" on November 27, 2000, and

WHEREAS, this ordinance provides for Town Council appointment of a Fort Hill Area Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee, consisting of no less than seven (7) members, up to three (3) of whom may be Town staff as ex-officio members, and,

WHEREAS, the membership of this committee shall reflect the composition of the neighborhood and include, but not be limited to, tenants and property owners, community organizations and representatives of businesses located in the neighborhood,

WHEREAS, vacancies currently exist on this Committee, and several members desire to continue their affiliation with this Committee, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the following appointments and reappointments to the Fort Hill Area Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee are hereby made with terms as indicated,

Appointments:

Officer Dexter Herron (ex officio), Community Police Officer, Town of Groton, 68 Groton Long Point Road, Groton, CT 06340 - Term expiring 12/31/07

Dana Parfitt, 32 St. Paul Court, Groton (homeowner) - Term expiring 12/31/08

Scott Meyer, 75 Midway Oval, Groton (tenant) - Term expiring 12/31/09

Reappointments:

Larry Nelson, 50 Midway Oval, Groton (homeowner).- Term expiring 12/31/09

Florine Greene, 155 Midway Oval (homewoner) - Term expiring 12/31/08

Roscoe Merritt, 19 Birmingham Court, Groton (homeowner) - Term expiring 12/31/08

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0032 Appointment of Richard Fitzgerald to Planning Commission

RESOLUTION APPOINTING RICHARD FITZGERALD AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Richard Fitzgerald, 8 Benjamin Road, Mystic, is hereby appointed as an alternate member to the Planning Commission for a term expiring 12/31/07.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0033 Appointment of Wendy Perez Pullen to Planning Commission

RESOLUTION APPOINTING WENDY PEREZ PULLEN AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Wendy Perez Pullen, 76 Deerfield Ridge Drive, Mystic, is hereby appointed as an alternate member to the Planning Commission, replacing Michael Sullo, for a term expiring 12/31/10.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0034 Appointment of Robert Deveau, Jr. to the Fair Rent Commission

RESOLUTION APPOINTING ROBERT DEVEAU, JR. TO THE FAIR RENT COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Robert A. Deveau, Jr., 33 Library Street, Mystic, is hereby appointed to the Fair Rent Commission for a term expiring 7/1/08.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0035 Appointment of Yolanda Carroll to the Board of Assessment Appeals

RESOLUTION APPOINTING YOLANDA CARROLL AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS

RESOLVED, that Yolanda M. Carroll, 88 Atlantic Avenue, Groton Long Point, is appointed as an alternate member of the Board of Assessment Appeals for a term ending 12/31/2007.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS**2006-0046 Fiscal Impact Statements for New Programs****FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENTS FOR NEW PROGRAMS****Referred**

Councilor Wright requested a new referral be submitted to the Finance Committee.

Property Tax Reform

Councilor O'Beirne received a fax from State Representative Lenny Winkler of a bill that she has just submitted to the Legislature which would partially address the concern about reform of property taxes. He will distribute copies to the Council.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:13 p.m. was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk

*Elga Concepcion
Office Assistant*